



## Scenic Vista Management Program Work Plan 2015

Yosemite National Park is an icon of scenic grandeur. When set aside in 1864, Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove were the first natural areas in the United States protected for public benefit and appreciation of the scenic landscape. Over three-million visitors come to Yosemite National Park each year to see its natural wonders.

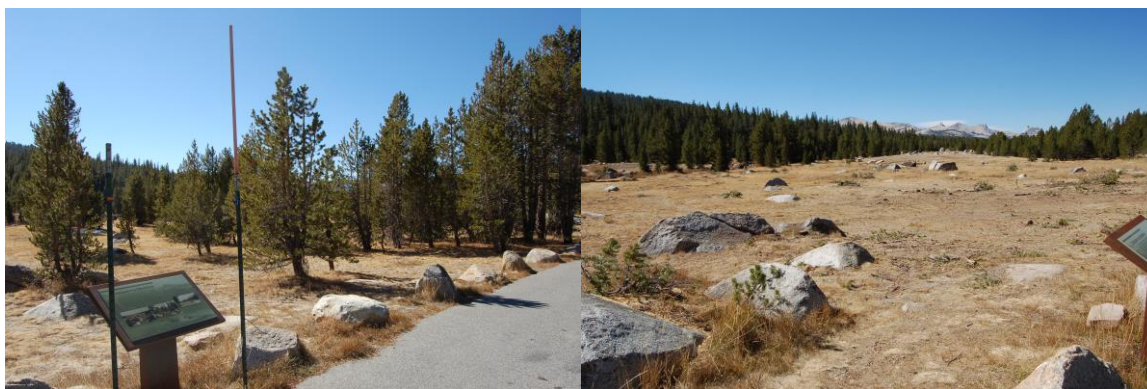
The scenic vista program documents, protects, and reestablishes Yosemite's important viewpoints and vistas, consistent with the natural processes and human influences that created them. The *Finding of No Significant Impact* for the *Scenic Vista Management Plan* environmental assessment was completed and signed in July of 2011 for sites outside of the Wild and Scenic River corridors. The *Tuolumne River Wild and Scenic River Plan, Appendix I*, describes actions for vista management consistent with preserving and enhancing the values of the river. The *Merced River Wild and Scenic River Plan, Appendix H*, describes actions for vista management within the Merced River corridor.

No more than 93 vista sites throughout the park will be initially managed, and an additional 21 sites monitored and maintained. A total of 30 sites have been initially managed, so far. Following the summary of work completed in 2014, is the work plan for 2015 with projected actions of three sites for initial management. In addition, another two sites are proposed, but will be completed if sufficient budget remains. This year's work will take place through a grant from the Yosemite Conservancy.

### Highlights of 2014

Yosemite's Forestry Crew successfully re-established views at seven new sites last year, including two originally scheduled for 2013. Fewer trees were cleared at the Crane Flat Fire Tower because many of the trees had already been removed due to the Rim Fire in 2013. Three other sites were scheduled in 2014, but remain to be done: Cascades Falls Bridge, North Country View and Parsons Lodge. At Cascade Falls there is a question regarding the age of a tree and a core will be taken. North Country View is a large site, with many dead from the Rim Fire. Contractors were sought to remove the large numbers of trees, but public bidding did not attract sufficient interest. The work will be completed by park staff, but will likely take longer to complete. There was a conflict with a public event at Parsons Lodge and work at the site was postponed until this year.

Work at the remaining sites was completed as expected. The most dramatic of the sites was the turnout east of



Before and immediately after removing Lodgepole Pines in 2014. NPS 2014.

Tuolumne Meadows referred to as "Island above the Ice." Lodgepole Pines had encroached on the meadow and the view to the Cathedral Range. At this site, there were far fewer trees above 6" dbh removed, and a significant number under 6" dbh than estimated. This is mainly due to many of the trees at this site being very near 6" dbh and being conservative in estimates. The crew worked after a freeze to minimize potential damage of trampling meadow grasses, and using only small equipment in the meadow to minimize compacting soil. Another site should be noticeable is the Lembert Dome vista, where Lodgepoles on the road embankment were removed, opening a dramatic view from the parking area to the Cathedral Range.

## Summary of 2014 Actions

Site	ID	Name	Planned trees removed over 6" dbh	Actual trees removed over 6" dbh	Actual trees removed under 6" dbh	Trees trimmed
1	101	Dana-Gibbs View (T36)	59	45	20	2
2	15	Dana Fork of the Tuolumne	12	12	8	0
3	103	Islands Above the Ice (T35)	473	129	380	0
4	106	Lembert Dome Parking	105	91	31	0
5	107	Tuolumne Meadow trailhead	10	10	8	0
6	77	Glacier Point Rd (G1)	46	40	20	1
7	141	Crane Flat Tower	34	12	0	0

## Summary of previous site to be completed

Site	ID	Name	Planned trees removed over 6" dbh	Actual trees removed over 6" dbh	Actual trees removed under 6" dbh	Trees trimmed
1	82	Cascade View, Big Oak Flat Rd.	10			
2	87	North Country View	191			
3	176	Parsons Lodge	43			

Traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups were notified of actions, and park staff and the public were notified via announcement in the daily report, and temporary onsite vista clearing road signs. The park received no comments on the work plan or the work in progress.

## 2015 Work Plan

This work plan is provided to ensure the public is informed and the park's implementation process is transparent. Comments about specific actions in the work plans are welcome. Park staff will review comments submitted to the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Individual, site-specific work plans may be adjusted or postponed based on additional information. The final work plan will be posted before any work begins, in the event there are any changes between the draft and final work plans. The park estimates work will begin in September, 2015.

This year we are proposing to work on up to six sites in Yosemite Valley. With limited funding available for this year, it will depend on what the contracting costs will be if all four will be done. The sites at El Capitan Meadow and Cathedral Spires are the higher priorities. If sufficient funds remain, the sites at the Chapel, Old Hutchings View, Ahwahnee Meadow, and Bridalveil Bridge will also be managed.

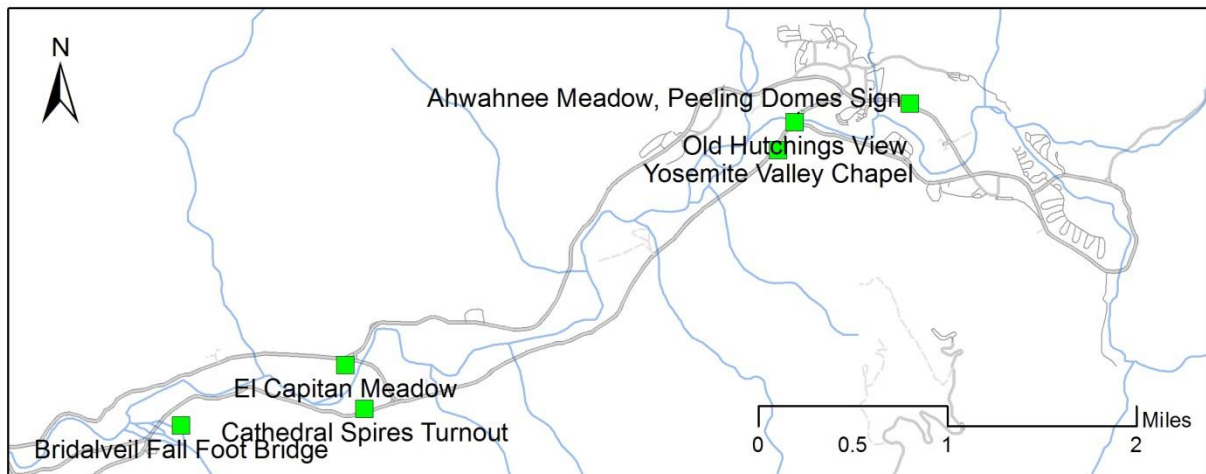
## Management Actions Common to all Work Plans

The following proposed site-specific work plans are within all guidelines set out in the *Scenic Vista Management Plan* environmental assessment *Finding of No Significant Impact*. Areas for tree removals are kept to a minimum and are within all set limits. There are numerous mitigations and protections to ensure effects of tree removal are minimized or eliminated.

- Park subject matter specialists review the annual work plan to ensure any potential adverse impacts are avoided, and appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.

- Work is scheduled to minimize potential impacts on bird and bat species. In general, September through October would be the best estimated time for vista clearing to take place, subject to site-specific conditions.
- Features with obvious high value to wildlife, such as snags (particularly those with evidence of wildlife use), very large diameter trees, oak trees, large diameter logs, and decaying wood will be preserved in place where possible. In locations such as North Country View, where hundreds of dead trees exist, some larger dead trees will be left in place.
- Key habitat features for Pacific fisher will be retained where possible.
- Special-status plant species and wildlife habitat will be protected. No special status vegetation or wildlife species have been identified in areas proposed for 2015 work.
- Equipment will be inspected before clearing activities commenced to ensure that machinery is clean and free of weed seed and propagules.
- Within riparian corridors white alder trees (*Alnus rhombifolia*) will not be removed unless critical to restoring a vista of high or medium value. No removal of species in the willow family (*Salix*), including black cottonwood trees (*Populus balsamifera*) will occur. None of these species are proposed to be removed in 2015.
- Several vista sites in the 2015 Work Plan are near river banks, but trees located immediately adjacent to or overhanging the water's edge will not be removed. No removal of in-stream, downed large wood will occur.
- Old growth trees and trees older than the establishment date of a vista will not be removed.
- Employee and visitor safety will be the highest priority during vista clearing operations. Tree felling operations will occur under the direction of the park forester, and will follow all park safety protocols.
- Biomass may be utilized or disposed of in any way that will not require additional compliance. This could be traditional cultural use, historic preservation projects, lop and scatter, onsite mulch, chip and haul, pile and burn, haul to woodlot, or contracted timber removal. Noise levels near residential or visitor use areas will be minimized.
- Work crews will avoid soil compaction when operating trucks or heavy equipment in wet or compactable soils by distributing machinery weight with military landing mats, snow, heavy plywood, or alternatives. Operators will move tracked equipment straight in and out of work sites and avoid turning while off pavement. Disturbed soils will be rehabilitated by restoring slope contour and using other best practices.
- Specific vegetation that is a critical component of a cultural landscape will not be removed.
- California black oaks will be removed only if critical to reestablish a high-value vista in the lower montane forests.
- No operations will take place in wilderness.
- Vehicles will contain equipment for the prevention and cleanup of spills. Any necessary temporary fuel storage and staging areas will be flagged, signed, and monitored. Work crews will use safe and environmentally friendly fuels, lubricants, hydraulic fluid, and other fluids.
- Stumps will be ground down, or flush cut, and buried with debris to hide the obvious cut appearance. Larger stumps may have habitat value, and some may be retained as long as the stump does not appear to be cut and is in keeping with the surrounding area.
- All work that generates noise levels above 76 decibels near residential or visitor use areas will be performed between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Temporary road closures will generally not exceed one-half hour. Road closures will be scheduled in periods of low visitation when possible.

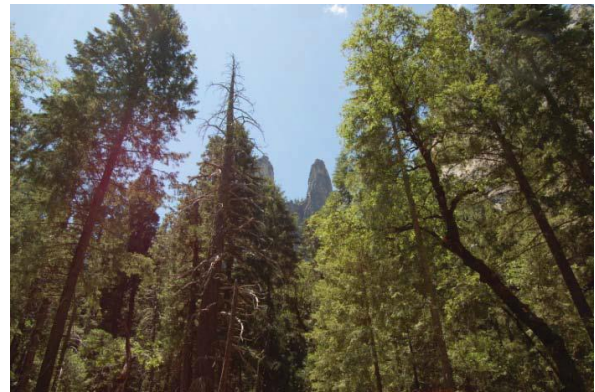
The six sites proposed for initial actions this year are high or medium value sites within the Merced River corridor. Actions at these sites will reestablish scenic vistas and restore vegetation. Specific actions are described in more detail in each site's work plan. Information on these sites is compiled into a geographic information system database to track future management and maintenance needs. Work will also be coordinated with the Facilities Management Software System, and park staff will begin to document the need for future cyclic maintenance. All other high priority sites that had initial actions taken, and other high priority sites not obscured, will be monitored and their status and maintenance needs recorded.



Scenic Vista Management  
2015 Work Plan  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

number	Name	Inventory number	priority	VRA score
<b>1</b>	<b>Cathedral Spires Turnout</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>7.5</b>

The Cathedral Spires Turnout on Southside Drive is located 1.3 miles east of the Wawona Road and Southside Drive intersection. This vista is listed as a contributing feature of the Yosemite Valley Historic District. The Valley Loop Road in its current configuration was constructed in 1928. Trees established before 1928 should not be removed.



**Figure 1.** Cathedral Spires Turnout. NPS 2012.

### Vista Management Actions

<b>Tree Removal over 6" dbh</b>						
Tree Species	<12" dbh	<20" dbh	<30" dbh	<40" dbh	<50" dbh	TOTAL
Cedar	5	-	6	1	-	12
Douglas Fir	-	6	1	-	1	8
Ponderosa	-	1	-	-	-	1

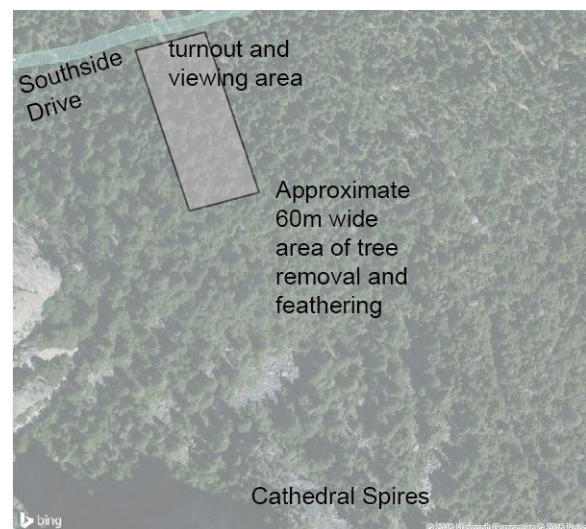
- Remove cut trees over 12" dbh from site.
- Flush cut stumps from newly cut trees when it has been determined that minimal impacts will occur to the surrounding vegetation from the use of stump grinding equipment.
- Chip woody debris and disperse as mulch on site at a rate of no more than 1 inch deep.
- Scatter all large woody debris left on site from the newly cut trees to reduce visual impacts.

### Restoration Actions

- Mitigate all impacts associated with the cutting and removal of targeted trees by scarifying compacted soils and mulching disturbed areas with native forest litter.
- Collect native grass and forb seed in late summer and early fall, as appropriate by species.
- Reseed any impacted areas upon completion of all forestry management actions.

### Continued Maintenance

- Evaluate and maintain site vistas every three years.
- Maintenance may include felling trees up to 6" dbh.



**Figure 2.** Cathedral Spires turnout. Not to Scale.



number	Name	Inventory number	priority	VRA score
<b>2</b>	<b>El Capitan Meadow</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>14.5</b>

The El Capitan Meadow vista is in the northeastern portion of El Capitan Meadow. The vista includes a large portion of the Yosemite Valley with iconic natural landmarks such as El Capitan, The Three Brothers, Cathedral Rocks, and the Cathedral Spires. Views from Northside Drive to El Capitan are also listed as a contributing vista to the Yosemite Valley Historical District. The Meadow is a popular location for visitors to watch climbers ascending the Yosemite Valley walls. Northside Drive in its current configuration was established by 1928; therefore trees established prior to this date should not be removed. Removing the trees will allow visitors to see El Capitan and the climbers from the side of the road, without trampling the meadow. In addition, conditions will improve for Black Oaks that have been shaded by the conifers. Actions in the site will be done over several years. Total number, species and size of trees per year will be determined through interdisciplinary input, dependent upon meadow restoration design work, and guided by the intent to not disturb visitors during the action.



**Figure 3.** El Capitan viewing area. NPS 2012.

### Total Vista Management Actions

<b>Tree removals in 2015</b>	
Total - #, size and species will be carefully selected with interdisciplinary input	10 - 20

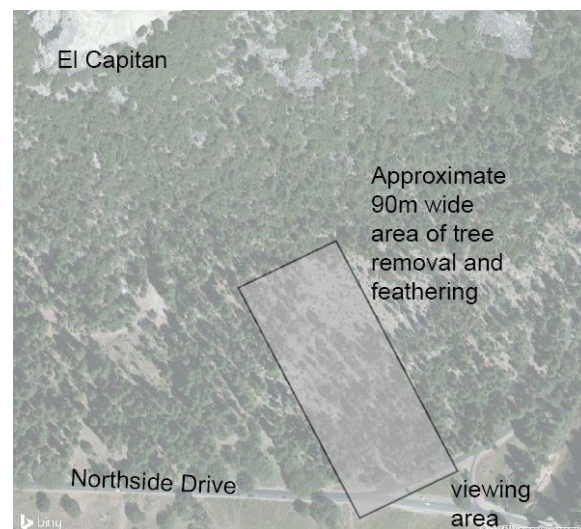
- Remove cut trees over 12" dbh from site.
- Flush cut stumps from newly cut trees when it has been determined that minimal impacts will occur to the surrounding vegetation from the use of stump grinding equipment.
- Chip woody debris and disperse as mulch on site at a rate of no more than 1 inch deep.
- Scatter all large woody debris left on site from the newly cut trees to reduce visual impacts.

### Restoration Actions

- Trampled areas of the meadow in the vicinity of the viewing area will be decompacted and social trails obscured.
- A retaining wall of logs will be laid down to provide a stable viewing area for visitors.
- Road base gravel has encroached into the meadow in the northeast area. The excess material will be collected and used for the viewing area surface.
- Collect native grass and forb seed in late summer and early fall, as appropriate by species.
- Reseed any impacted areas upon completion of all forestry management actions.

### Continued Maintenance

- Evaluate and maintain site vistas every year. Maintenance may include felling trees <6" DBH.



**Figure 4.** El Capitan viewing area. Not to Scale.

number	Name	Inventory number	priority	VRA score
<b>3</b>	<b>Yosemite Valley Chapel</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>10.5</b>

The Yosemite Valley Chapel is located on Southside Drive 2.5 Miles east of the El Capitan Crossover. The Chapel is the oldest building in the Valley. It was moved to its present location in 1901, but was originally built in 1879. There are some trees to remove in the immediate foreground, but most of the trees are taller conifers about 300 m away, across the meadow, that obscure the lower fall. Trees established before 1901 should not be removed. There are fruit trees that are a cultural resource and shall not be removed.



**Figure 5.** Yosemite Chapel view. NPS 2012.

### Vista Management Actions

Tree Removal over 6" dbh				
Tree Species	<12" dbh	<20" dbh	<50" dbh	TOTAL
Ponderosa	5	1	1	7
Cedar	2	5	1	8

- This vista will be managed if funds allow in 2015.
- Remove cut trees over 12" dbh from site.
- Flush cut stumps from newly cut trees when it has been determined that minimal impacts will occur to the surrounding vegetation from the use of stump grinding equipment.
- Chip woody debris and disperse as mulch on site at a rate of no more than 1 inch deep.
- Scatter all large woody debris left on site from the newly cut trees to reduce visual impacts.

### Restoration Actions

- Mitigate all impacts associated with the cutting and removal of targeted trees by scarifying compacted soils and mulching disturbed areas with native forest litter.
- Collect native grass and forb seed in late summer and early fall, as appropriate by species.
- Reseed any impacted areas upon completion of all forestry management actions.

### Continued Maintenance

- Evaluate and maintain site vistas every three years.
- Maintenance may include felling trees up to 6" dbh.



**Figure 6.** Yosemite Chapel view. Not to Scale.

number	Name	Inventory number	priority	VRA score
<b>4</b>	<b>Old Hutchings View (Sentinel Bridge)</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>8.75</b>

Old Hutchings View is located adjacent to the southwest corner of Sentinel Bridge. This vista looks across the Merced River to Yosemite Falls. This is the view that originated from the Hutchings House (also called the Upper Hotel) that was across Southside Drive to the south. The original hotel began in 1859, and was added onto during the tenure of James Hutchings. The current Sentinel Bridge was built in 1994, a replacement to a series of bridges that have been in this general location. A conservative date for the current location of the vista is 1928 with the layout of Southside Drive. Trees established before this time should not be removed. There are numerous conifer saplings that will also be removed during initial management of the site.



**Figure 7.** Old Hutchings view. NPS 2012.

#### **Vista Management Actions**

<b>Tree Removal over 6" dbh</b>			
<b>Tree Species</b>	<b>&lt;20" dbh</b>	<b>&lt;40" dbh</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Ponderosa	17	-	17
Cedar	-	1	1

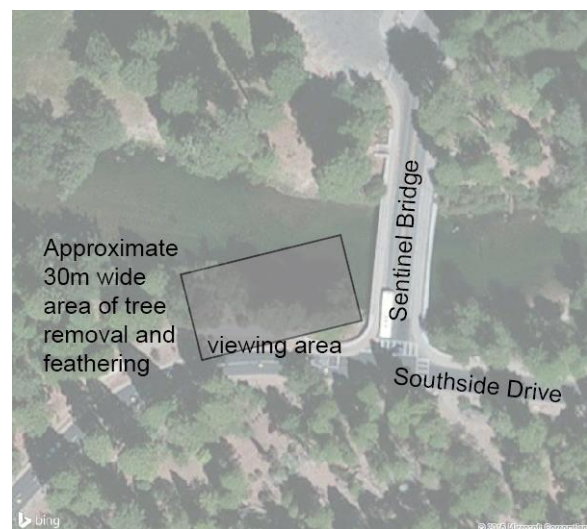
- This site will be managed in 2015 if funds allow.
- Remove cut trees over 12" dbh from site.
- Flush cut stumps from newly cut trees when it has been determined that minimal impacts will occur to the surrounding vegetation from the use of stump grinding equipment.
- Chip woody debris and disperse as mulch on site at a rate of no more than 1 inch deep.
- Scatter all large woody debris left on site from the newly cut trees to reduce visual impacts.

#### **Restoration Actions**

- Mitigate all impacts associated with the cutting and removal of targeted trees by scarifying compacted soils and mulching disturbed areas with native forest litter.
- Collect native grass and forb seed in late summer and early fall, as appropriate by species.
- Reseed any impacted areas upon completion of all forestry management actions.

#### **Continued Maintenance**

- Evaluate and maintain site vistas every three years.
- Maintenance may include felling trees up to 6" dbh.



**Figure 8.** Old Hutchings view. Not to Scale.



number	Name	Inventory number	priority	VRA score
<b>5</b>	<b>Ahwahnee Meadow, Peeling Domes Sign</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>11.5</b>

The Ahwahnee Meadow is located on Northside Drive 0.5 miles from the intersection of Southside Drive. The vista is to the east looking at North Dome, Royal Arches, Washington's Column, and Half Dome. Northside Drive in its current configuration was constructed in 1928, so no trees established before this time should be removed. Removing this segment of Northside Drive is considered under the Merced River Plan. If the segment is removed, and no planned walkway replaces it in this area, the vista should not be monitored or maintained.



**Figure 9.** Ahwahnee Meadow. Not to Scale.

#### **Vista Management Actions**

##### **Tree Removal over 6" dbh**

<b>Tree Species</b>	<b>&lt;50" dbh</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Ponderosa	4	4

- This site will be managed in 2015 if funds allow.
- Remove cut trees over 12" dbh from site.
- Flush cut stumps from newly cut trees when it has been determined that minimal impacts will occur to the surrounding vegetation from the use of stump grinding equipment.
- Chip woody debris and disperse as mulch on site at a rate of no more than 1 inch deep.
- Scatter all large woody debris left on site from the newly cut trees to reduce visual impacts.

#### **Restoration Actions**

- Mitigate all impacts associated with the cutting and removal of targeted trees by scarifying compacted soils and mulching disturbed areas with native forest litter.
- Collect native grass and forb seed in late summer and early fall, as appropriate by species.
- Reseed any impacted areas upon completion of all forestry management actions.

#### **Continued Maintenance**

- Evaluate and maintain site vistas every year.
- Maintenance may include felling trees up to 6" dbh.

number	Name	Inventory number	priority	VRA score
<b>6</b>	<b>Bridalveil Fall Foot Bridge</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>7.25</b>

The Bridalveil Fall Foot Bridge is located on the Bridalveil Fall trail at the base of the fall. This vista is from one of three bridges built in 1913 at the waterfall. These are the oldest remaining bridges in the valley. The intention in managing this vista is not to create a broad view, but a focused and intimate view of the fall. Trees established before 1913 should not be removed.

#### Vista Management Actions

Tree Removal over 6" dbh					
Tree Species	<12" dbh	<20" dbh	<40" dbh	<50" dbh	TOTAL
Douglas Fir	1			2	3
Cedar			1		1
Live Oak		2			2
Black Oak	Trim limbs only				

- This site will be managed in 2015 if funds allow.
- Remove cut trees over 12" dbh from site.
- Flush cut stumps from newly cut trees when it has been determined that minimal impacts will occur to the surrounding vegetation from the use of stump grinding equipment.
- Chip woody debris and disperse as mulch on site at a rate of no more than 1 inch deep.
- Scatter all large woody debris left on site from the newly cut trees to reduce visual impacts.



**Figure 10.** Bridalveil Fall Foot Bridge. NPS 2009

#### Restoration Actions

- Mitigate all impacts associated with the cutting and removal of targeted trees by scarifying compacted soils and mulching disturbed areas with native forest litter.
- Collect native grass and forb seed in late summer and early fall, as appropriate by species.
- Reseed any impacted areas upon completion of all forestry management actions.

#### Continued Maintenance

- Evaluate and maintain site vistas every year.
- Maintenance may include felling trees up to 6" dbh.